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Committee on Conferences
Substantive session
Agenda item 6

Draft medium-term plan for the period 2002–2005

Programme 27
General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs and conference services

27.1 The major objective of programme 27 is to facilitate the deliberations of the General Assembly and its General and Main Committees and various subsidiary organs, the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary and ad hoc bodies, as well as special conferences dealing with disarmament, international security, decolonization, economic, social and related matters, through the provision of conference services to these entities for meetings planning and coordination, translation, editing, interpretation, publishing and the distribution of documentation. These services also include meetings and documentation services to all intergovernmental and expert bodies at Headquarters and other locations for which it is responsible, as well as other translation and publishing services.

27.2 The basic mandates for the provision of conference services are contained in the rules of procedure of the main organs of the United Nations. Additional mandates are found in the resolutions adopted regularly by the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the pattern and calendar of conferences and on the control and limitation of documentation.

27.3 Overall intergovernmental direction concerning the provision of conference services is given by the General Assembly on the advice of the Committee on Conferences, in accordance with Assembly resolution 43/222 B of 21 December 1988, which established the terms of reference of the Committee.

27.4 The Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services is responsible for the implementation of this programme and for the achievement of its objectives.

Subprogramme 27.1
General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs

27.5 The major objective of this subprogramme is to ensure, through the provision of authoritative advice and technical secretariat services, the orderly and procedurally correct conduct of the meetings and other work of the General Assembly, its General, First, Special Political and Decolonization (Fourth), Second and Third Committees and the subsidiary and ad hoc bodies under the aegis of the Assembly, including the Disarmament Commission and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean; the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary and ad hoc bodies and special conferences dealing with economic, social and related matters; the Trusteeship Council, as required; the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples; and other intergovernmental bodies in the fields of international

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security, economic, social and related areas, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the rules of procedures and established practices of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council.

27.6 The General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division will prepare analytical studies on the rules and procedures of the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council; conduct consultations with the Presidents and bureaux of the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council and the presiding officers of the Main Committees and of other intergovernmental bodies, as well as with representatives of Member States, on all matters relating to the work of those bodies, with particular reference to the effective scheduling and conduct of meetings.

27.7 In the area of decolonization, in addition to providing technical secretariat services for the plenary meetings of the Special Committee, the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division also provides organizational and secretariat servicing support to decolonization-related activities, such as visiting missions and the mandated activities of the Special Committee relating to intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

27.8 Under this subprogramme, the General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division will also conduct research and prepare analytical studies on the application and interpretation of the provisions of the relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations related to the activities of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, their subsidiary and ad hoc bodies and their rules of procedure, for inclusion in the *Repertory of Practice of United Nations Organs*. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 51/209 and 52/161, the Division will coordinate the production of the volume of the *Repertory* devoted to the General Assembly and will endeavour to update the *Repertory* and ensure its regular publication.

27.9 In order to facilitate the organization and conduct of the meetings of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council and their subsidiary bodies, the Division will prepare the necessary parliamentary documentation and ensure the correct and duly authorized submission of reports and communications for processing as official General Assembly, Economic and Social Council or Trusteeship Council documents, as well as their timely issuance in accordance with the practice, programme of work and schedule of the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council.

27.10 The General Assembly and Economic and Social Council Affairs Division will also conduct consultations and coordinate the assignment of responsibilities for the implementation of General Assembly and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions and follow-up to ensure timely action by relevant bodies.

27.11 Another objective of the subprogramme is to facilitate, through the provision of technical advice, the deliberations of the subsidiary organs and various open-ended working groups established by the Assembly and the Economic and Social Council in their consideration of major issues that will have significant impact on the work of the Organization.

Subprogramme 27.2
Planning, development, and coordination of conference services

27.12 The main objectives of this subprogramme will be:

(a) To improve the global planning and coordination of conference services with rational allocation and capacity utilization of the existing conference resources;

(b) To develop and implement such new conference-servicing policies, procedures and practices as may become necessary in view of the changing activities and requirements of the Organization, in particular through regular consultation with committees and bodies at Headquarters and other duty stations to assess their needs;

(c) To ensure that intergovernmental bodies, special conferences and Member States in general have access to meeting and documentation services in accordance with the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the various bodies and organs of the United Nations;

(d) To upgrade the technological capacity in conference services in line with new developments in technology;

(e) To ensure compliance with regulations concerning documentation.

27.13 Relevant instruments to achieve these objectives include the preparation of the draft calendar of conferences, scheduling of meetings and documentation, provision of substantive support to the Committee on Conferences and participation in conference planning missions. Workload statistics, performance indicators and cost information will be routinely refined and provided for both Secretariat and external use (e.g. by intergovernmental bodies). Technical advice and support will be provided for the planning and

introduction of technological innovations in conference services and the upgrading of existing systems.

Subprogramme 27.3
Translation and editorial services

27.14 The main objectives of this subprogramme will be:

(a) To improve the efficiency and timeliness in the issuance of documentation produced in all six official languages, in strict observance of the resolutions and rules establishing language arrangements for the various bodies and organs of the United Nations;

(b) To increase the efficiency and to improve the quality of the translation and editorial services.

27.15 During the period covered by the plan, self-revision will be used within reasonable limits while safeguarding standards of quality. Reliance on contractual translation will continue with a broadening of the range of material processed in this manner and a more consistent use of quality control procedures. Wider access by editors and translators to electronic reference and terminology databases and the expanding use of computer-assisted translation will further facilitate the work and ensure accuracy and consistency. An increased electronic flow of texts, allowing, *inter alia*, for more workload sharing among conference centres, will contribute to timeliness and cost-effectiveness.

Subprogramme 27.4
Interpretation, meeting and publishing services

27.16 The main objectives will be:

(a) To improve the efficiency and timeliness of meeting and documentation services, while maintaining a high standard of quality;

(b) To ensure the timely and efficient production, distribution and storage of documents and publications in the official languages of the Organization six weeks in advance of all meetings.

27.17 To achieve these objectives, the departmental application of advanced electronic information management and communications technology will continue, in order to address the demand for both printed and electronic products and to make the document production operation speedier and more efficient through the establishment of more comprehensive electronic links throughout the process, from initial submission to reproduction, distribution and storage. External printing will be further reduced through the use of desktop publishing in all official languages and the continued expansion of the technical capabilities of the in-house reproduction plant. The reproduction and distribution functions will be adjusted as required by the widespread access to electronic documents stored on optical disk and the expanding capacity for printing on demand. Computer-assisted storage and retrieval systems and more mechanized working methods will be developed in the distribution area. Off-site verbatim reporting will be expanded and, contingent on the results of pilot-projects, remote interpretation will be developed as a complement to on-site services.

Legislative mandates

Legislative mandates for the creation of the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services

General Assembly resolutions

52/12	Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform
52/220	Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999
53/214	Questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1998–1999

Subprogramme 27.1
General Assembly and Economic and Social Council affairs

Relevant articles of the Charter of the United Nations

General Assembly resolutions

S-10/2	Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly
52/12	Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform
52/220	Questions relating to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999

Subprogramme 27.2
Planning, development and coordination of conference services

General Assembly resolutions

49/237	Questions relating to the programme budget for the biennium 1994–1995
50/11	Multilingualism
50/206, 51/211 and 52/214	Pattern of conferences